

**WASHINGTON STATE BIODIVERSITY COUNCIL
SUMMARY MINUTES**

*DATE: March 10, 2010
TIME: 9:00 a.m.*

*PLACE: Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
Olympia, Washington*

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Josh Weiss, Chair
Dave Roseleip, Vice Chair
Leonard Bauer
Dave Brittell
Rob Fimbel
Mitch Friedman
John Garner
Pete Heide
Tom Laurie
Mike Mosman
Lynda Ransley
Ron Shultz
Clay Sprague
Jamie Tolfree
Megan White

WA State Association of Counties
WA Agriculture & Forestry Education Foundation
Department of Commerce (previously CTED)
Department of Fish & Wildlife
State Parks
Conservation Northwest
Tacoma Nature Center
WA Forest Protection Association
Department of Ecology
Port Blakely Tree Farms
Puget Sound Partnership
WA State Conservation Commission
Department of Natural Resources
Skamania County
WA State Department of Transportation

PRESENTERS and GUESTS:

Sarah Brace
Kaleen Cottingham
Hilary Culverwell
Pene Speaks

Soundwide*Starrfish Consulting
Recreation and Conservation Office
Soundwide*Starrfish Consulting
Washington Natural Heritage Program

STAFF and CONTRACTORS:

Paul Dziedzic
Lynn Helbrecht
Lori Lawrence
Rachel LeBaron Anderson

ACTIONS TAKEN

Item	Action	Reference
Meeting minutes	Approved	Page 2

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Council discussed the direction it received from the Natural Resources Cabinet and the Governor's Chief of Staff to develop a consensus transition plan to move some of its work into an existing entity—potentially the well-established Natural Heritage Advisory Council, housed at the Department of Natural Resources.
- Sarah Brace and Hilary Culverwell from Soundwide*Starrfish Environmental Consulting presented their work on "Expanding the Conservation Toolbox." The goal of the Land Use/Local Government Workgroup's project was to develop a catalogue of the tools that have been most

valuable to land use planners for conservation planning, gather them in one place, and make them accessible.

- Staff reported on next steps for the Biodiversity Scorecard. A technical writer and graphic designer will prepare a summary and fact sheet about the Scorecard for broader audiences. A Science Committee subgroup recommended that key agencies develop a memorandum of understanding aimed at publishing a first edition of the Scorecard.

OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Josh Weiss, Chair, opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m. He reviewed the agenda and asked Council members to introduce themselves. Facilitator Paul Dziedzic reviewed the goals for the day's meeting and Lynn Helbrecht reviewed the materials in the meeting packet.

COUNCIL BUSINESS ITEMS:

Approval of October meeting minutes

Approval of Minutes

Josh called for a **MOTION** to approve the January 20, 2010 meeting minutes. Dave Brittell **MOVED** approval of the minutes. Pete Heide **SECONDED**. The minutes were **APPROVED** as presented.

Budget Update

Lynn Helbrecht gave an overview of the current budget. Approximately \$8,000 remains in the budget for workgroup projects for this fiscal year ending June 30th, 2010. Of the \$10,000 allocated for the website re-design, we anticipate spending \$7,000 to rewrite the technical Scorecard report. Of the \$10,000 budgeted for Land Use Project, we have spent \$4,500. For the next fiscal year, ending June 30th, 2011, approximately \$128,000 remains for staff, business expenses, and projects.

Kaleen noted that the House and Senate budgets retain the Council's General Fund-State funding and extend the Council through fiscal year 2011, however the Governor's budget does not. Lynn's report is based on the Governor's budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

FUTURE OF COUNCIL'S WORK:

The executive committee developed three options for the future of the Councils work. These were e-mailed to the full Council for review.

1. Focus on completing projects under the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).
2. Integrate the Biodiversity Council into the Natural Heritage Advisory Council.
3. Merge with the Natural Resources Cabinet, providing accountability at a high level.

The options were reviewed and a combination of numbers 2 and 3 was recommended: leadership by the Cabinet and transition to the Natural Heritage Advisory Council.

The executive committee prepared a memo that Kaleen Cottingham and John Mankowski presented to the Cabinet on behalf of the Biodiversity Council.

- The Cabinet did not feel they had time to make a decision about directing an interim committee on legislative proposals.
- The Biodiversity Council will develop a consensus transition approach for transferring its role and function into the Natural Heritage Advisory Council. Consensus from the Biodiversity Council, leadership, and stakeholders is important.
- The consensus transition plan must be in place by June 30, 2010; if consensus has not been reached, Kaleen will return to the Governor's chief of staff for guidance.
- Any consensus request legislation will be due to OFM by mid-September, with the budget request due in August.

Council Discussion

Council members aired concerns and ideas about how to approach the transition planning process:

- Focus on selected parts of the strategy that are most important to the Council.
- Consider an approach that proposes the smallest change possible—concern about lack of appetite in Governor's Office and legislature for "expanding" a task force or Council.
- Compare the stakeholders and interest groups of the two Councils. Where is there overlap? Where is there divergence? What does this tell us?
- Clay suggested that a proposal might include:
 - Analysis of functional alignment
 - How to address communication and outreach to stakeholders about the change
 - Draft legislation
 - Budget (how funded from where)
- Concern about diluting the existing functions of Natural Heritage Advisory Council
- Should think about a new name to reflect the broader mission—explore how to position it so that it is not tightly tied to state government and includes a private landowner component.
- Get started on a dialogue sooner rather than later—there may be bumps in the road.
- Explore public/private funding options for the new entity.
- Pete Heide brought up another idea – using the Northwest Environmental Forum (organized by Brian Boyle) as a forum for biodiversity issues. Could be stand alone or could be combined with the Heritage option.
 - Lynn suggested that an annual environmental forum would be a good addition.
 - Lynda Ransley suggested that an integrated Natural Heritage Advisory Council and an annual forum would be complementary.
- Housing the Biodiversity Council in RCO has worked well in terms of giving the Council independence— how can we carry this forward in working with DNR?
- What if Natural Heritage Advisory Council is at risk in the next round of Boards and Commission cuts?
- We need to ensure that we don't lose focus on biodiversity
- Concern that Natural Heritage Advisory Council is advisory to one agency (although Pene pointed out this is not exactly true). We want to ensure that the independent nature of the Council is preserved.
- Focus a proposal on how we can make this the BEST we can and then shop it around. Don't be too timid about the Boards and Commissions thing. This has a lot going for it.
- Consider a "go for it" approach—within the context of political realities
- Leonard noted that this transition could be a good fit with where the Council is headed with the Land Use Project/Toolbox for Conservation Planning
- Make sure the keep the focus on the landscape level—not just about threatened and endangered species.
- Focus on the "functions" of the Biodiversity Council (in the leadership strategy) that we want to see preserved

In response to Council members' questions, Pene Speaks gave more information about the Natural Heritage Advisory Council:

- The Natural Heritage Advisory Council is a collaboration of private/public entities that came out of the Natural Preserves Act of 1972. Statutory authority is focused on natural area systems.
- It establishes priorities from an ecosystem perspective and works in conjunction with the Washington Natural Heritage Program at DNR.
- All ten voting members are private citizens. Five members are scientists, making up a technical advisory group. The Natural Heritage Advisory Council also has an agriculture member, forestry member, land trust member, Nature Conservancy member, and other At-Large members.
- The Natural Heritage Plan is updated every two years. The plan includes ecosystems, plant communities, and animals of high conservation importance.

- The Washington Natural Heritage Program is part of an international forum and part of NatureServe. They work with 38 states and many foreign countries.
- The Natural Heritage Advisory Council has looked at the Biodiversity Strategy and there are a number of good fits. Maintaining the Biodiversity maps is important to the Heritage Council. The Natural Area Registry is somewhat of an incentive; that program could possibly be expanded.
- While not all of the Biodiversity Strategy would be a good fit with what the Natural Heritage Council currently does, there is a tremendous amount of overlap. Public education is one area that has not been part of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council's work.

In response to questions, Pene clarified these aspects of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council's work:

- Much of the Heritage Council's work relates to land acquisition, but the plan is also used in setting conservation priorities and land planning statewide. Also for wetland strategies.
- The Natural Heritage Advisory Council has five agency representatives, but they do not vote.
- The Heritage Council focuses its efforts on ecosystems (both common and rare); this fits well with the Biodiversity Council's emphasis on landscape-level conservation.
- She noted that opportunities to work with conservation districts have not arisen.

The discussion concluded with Josh Weiss suggesting it would be helpful to think about the core functions we would like to see preserved. Are the six core functions identified in the Leadership Strategy currently relevant? An important first step is to identify what our current principals and priorities are.

- Dave Roseleip noted it is also important to bookmark other recommendations in the Strategy that may not be immediate priorities, but are still important.

The Executive Committee, along with Clay Sprague, Tom Laurie, and Kaleen Cottingham, will follow up and report in June.

BREAK

PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION:

Staff had planned to discuss a proposed event for the June 3 meeting, which was anticipated to be the last Biodiversity Council meeting. The transition planning process has superseded such an event.

COUNCIL PROJECTS:

Land Use/Local Government Workgroup Project – “Expanding the Conservation Toolbox”

The goal of this project was to develop a catalogue of tools for conservation planning that have been most valuable to land use planners and put them in one place. Lynn Helbrecht noted that the project had originally been twelve months long, but had been scaled back to a six month project. She introduced Sarah Brace and Hilary Culverwell from Soundwide*Starrfish Environmental Consulting.

This project had two tasks 1) create a catalogue of planning tools; 2) interview planners. They located national examples and case studies to identify the breadth of activities, see what tools were needed, choose categories within the tools, and to populate the catalog. Lynn reminded the group that the information was designed for a website. She would like this tool to live within an organization, so it can easily be found.

Hilary developed a list of planners, interview questions, conducted interviews, and synthesized the information into key findings and recommendations. Responses indicated that some of the most useful tools included:

- Example ordinances, case studies, organizing information, and maps.
- Guidance on Shoreline Master Plans and wetland ordinances, SEPA help desk, the Ecology website, and WDFW Regional Habitat biologists.
- Guidelines for how planners can best work with planning commissions.

Some hurdles included:

- State guidance coming too late.
- Maps without detail at the site level.
- True cost/benefit information often missing.
- Technical training often lacking, as are staffing and education.
- Lack of public awareness; the need for science to be meaningfully translated.
- Biodiversity can be too broad a concept for practical implementation at the local scale.
- Regulations are often a hurdle. Protection standards need to be site specific.
- The sequencing of projects—most are designed before environmental review is done.
- Research and communication in making the economic case for conservation.
- Planners cannot sell conservation; they need political people to sell it for them.
- Tools and requirements aren't nested into existing requirements

Questions and Answers:

- Tom Laurie voiced concern that this work will not help without its incorporation at the state requirement level.
 - Hilary replied that most planners care about conservation, but having the tool work within the process is helpful. Some planners will not do this part unless it is required, especially in smaller jurisdictions with less staff and resources.
- Pete asked if Biodiversity was in conflict with other issues planners handle.
 - Sarah replied that in Chelan County people live there because of the local biodiversity, but when it stops landowners from building, there is immediate conflict. Planners need help getting the public to see both sides of the issue. There are likely thousands of planners within the state.
- Dave Roseleip wondered if biodiversity was too global at the local level.
 - Hilary replied that they did a lot of framing to make the concept of biodiversity clear to the planners. Several people used global warming as an analogy of how it feels too large to make a difference.

Council Discussion

The Land Use Committee had reviewed the results and found it to be a good start, but they wished it had gone further. They would have liked to see more case studies, examples of policy language, and more entries in the database.

- Lynn suggested a next step is getting the tool into planners' hands.
- Ron Shultz suggested combining a case study with a model ordinance to create an example of what we want to show planners.
- Jamie Tolfree noted that one example will not cover every type of jurisdiction. LIDAR is a new, informative GIS tool.
- Tom Laurie said planners look for information under the function they are currently working on.
- Mike Mosman asked if there is a professional society for planners. There are national and state societies. Ikuno Masterson is the president of the state association.
- Josh Weiss observed that the open space ordinance is working well in Pierce County. It is better to say "here are tools to use" vs. "here are additional requirements." Planner positions have been cut, leaving them understaffed.
- Mitch suggested with current staffing issues of planners, we take a more comprehensive approach by rebuilding from a basic level. Ron Shultz felt it would be helpful to rebuild in a way that reaches planners and works with current constraints.
- Rob Fimbel said that looking at case studies allows people to realize they can change their work, but they also need tools.
- Pete Heide said case studies are good, but we should make sure we are not asking planners to introduce our ideas to the public.

The land use committee will report to the Council in June.

Biodiversity Scorecard

Staff reviewed the report after the January meeting and met with a subgroup of the Science Committee. It considered two questions: 1) what entity or entities could be suitable homes for the Scorecard work, and 2) should the Council act before its sunset date to further the work sponsored to date? And if so, how?

1. Where to house the Scorecard?
 - a. If the Council's projects are assigned to another entity, that entity sponsors the Scorecard.
 - b. If the Council continues, it makes sense to create a Memo of Understanding (MOU) between WDFW, DNR, and Washington State Parks (at least), with the University of Washington in an advisory role, to sponsor future work.
2. What actions should the Council take?
 - a. Rewrite and summarize the technical report. It needs to be written for a wider audience. Staff are working to hire a writer and graphic designer to prepare a fact sheet and 15-page summary of the report.
 - i. The summary would serve to capture and share the best of the project—and use it to solicit future support.
 - ii. The summary could emphasize a select subset of indicators as an affordable way to get the Scorecard functional.
 - iii. Consider the list of indicators in the current framework as a suite of things to pick from, rather than a prescriptive recipe.
 - b. Work with agencies to develop an MOU aimed at publishing a first edition of the Scorecard.
 - i. WDFW, DNR, Parks to start—consider other agencies as appropriate.
 - ii. Until 2011, this will be coordinated through RCO.
 - iii. The MOU should contain a provision to look for funding and authorize staff time from each agency.
 - iv. Future work on Scorecard to focus on a reduced number of indicators, released at intervals—this could serve to keep biodiversity status in front of the public periodically.

Council Discussion

Council members expressed support. John Garner suggested releasing an annual report, perhaps around Earth Day. Rob Fimbel stressed the importance of communicating the science so people can understand it. Mike Mosman said this was going in the right direction—he had been concerned that the technical report would gather dust if it were not rewritten.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

REVIEW DECISIONS, NEXT STEPS, AND CLOSING COMMENTS:

Josh said goodbye to Lynn Helbrecht with a gift from the Council. She has resigned to take a job with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The next Council meeting is June 3, 2010.

The Meeting adjourned at 12:18.

Josh Weiss, Chair